

Olga Batrakova



Guide

**EVS
2011**

From the Author



Hello my dear friends!

And welcome to Czech Republic!

My name is Olja, and I am an ex-volunteer of Lužanky. Within my mini-project I'd really like to do something useful for you who come to my place. And now you're holding in your hands my brainchild.

Hope you could dive into the process and learn more with tips from VoG. I wish this aid will come in handy and help you to discover Czech Republic, Brno and other interesting things easily. And maybe, who knows, later you would like to add something or improve this guide. That would be great!

I would like to present all the information in an accessible and easy form.

I wish you good luck and success!

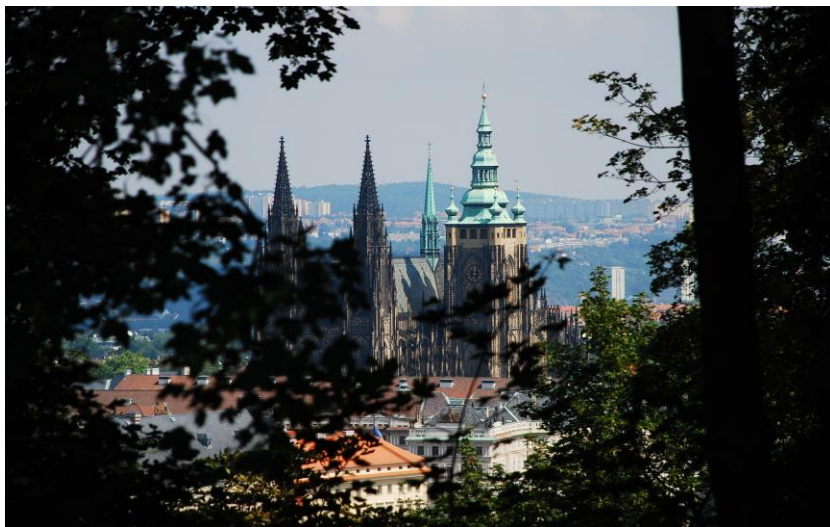
S přátelským pozdravem,

OLJA.

Content

<i>1. Czech Republic. Brno. Historical Review.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>2. Emergency Numbers.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>3. Insurance.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>4. Conflict Situation And How To Deal With It...8</i>	
<i>5. Learning, the Czech Language</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>6. Practical Tips And Links.....</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>7. Travelling.....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>8. Leisure</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>9. Volunteer's Fable.....</i>	<i>15</i>

Czech Republic. Brno. Historical Review



The Czech Republic is a country in the heart of Europe with a long and turbulent history. It lost its independence as a kingdom in 1620, to reemerge only three centuries later as one of the new states established after World War I. The Czech Republic, comprising the three traditional countries of Bohemia, Moravia and part of Silesia, was joined with Slovakia to form the state of Czechoslovakia, one of the most stable and inspiring European democracies of the Interbellum.

The success of the country was to a large extent the fruit of the work of the first Czechoslovak President, the philosopher Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk and his supporters. He was a brilliant advocate of the concept of democracy based on civil initiatives and people's self-organizing. He is correctly recognized by leading scholars as one of the first and most talented prophets of the idea of democracy as a civil society, which is principally open and accountable to its citizens.

Unfortunately, the country was broken by Hitler's invasion to re-emerge as one of the Soviet satellites after World War II. The Masarykian tradition spoke out loudly once again during the so-called Prague Spring in 1968, the Czechoslovak movement for independent and authentic democracy, which was destroyed by tanks during the Soviet occupation. The country then fell into a deep lethargy from which it has been painfully and slowly awakening since the fall of the communist regime in November 1989.

In November 1989, Czechoslovakia returned to a liberal democracy through the peaceful "Velvet Revolution". However, Slovak national aspirations strengthened and on 1 January 1993, the country peacefully split into the independent Czech Republic and Slovakia. Both countries went through economic reforms and privatizations, with the intention of creating a capitalist economy. This process was largely successful; in 2006 the Czech Republic was recognized by the World Bank as a "developed country", and in 2009 the Human Development Index ranked it as a nation of "Very High Human Development". From 1991, the Czech Republic, originally as part of Czechoslovakia and now in its own right, has been a member of the Visegrád Group and from 1995, the OECD. The Czech Republic joined NATO on 12 March 1999 and the European Union on 1 May 2004. It held the Presidency of the European Union for the first half of 2009.

Brno



Brno, the Moravian metropolis, can boast outstanding landmarks that are the evidence of the city's rich history.

The panorama of the city Brno, the St. Peter and Paul's Cathedral – Petrov – will enthral you at the first sight. However its Gothic silhouette has not been towering above the city for a long time as both the spires were built only at the beginning of

the 20th century. (www.petrovinfo.cz)

Not many cities can tell that another dominant feature of theirs is a famous prison. This is the case in Brno: in the 18th century the royal Špilberk castle was the notorious “Prison of the Nation” where Austrian prisoners, French Jacobins and many others suffered. Špilberk has been reconstructed recently and offers its visitors several permanent expositions as well as a tour of the underground casemates. In summer Špilberk courtyard hosts Shakespeare and music festivals. (www.spilberk.cz)

The second Brno castle, Veverí, looming above the Brno Lake is a frequent tourist destination, too. The Veverí castle is situated in the beautiful landscape of Podcomorské forests, i.e. in the land of the May Fair Tale. (www.veveri.cz)

A jewel of Brno modernism and the world best known monument is the Tugendhat Villa at the Černopolská street. The masterpiece of German architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe of

1930 is inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List and attracts more and more visitors each year. (www.tugendhat-villa.cz)

Some more info you can find here:

Tourist info Center: IC Radnická 8 (Stará Radnice). Tel.: +420 542 427 150/ 542 427 151/ 542 221 450. e-mail: info@ticbrno.cz, www.ticbrno.cz



Emergency numbers

Of course non of us can be sure what will happen, so I'd like to write here some important emergency contacts, but I hope you will not need to use them ☺

- **112 – EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBER LINE – INTEGRATED FOR POLICE, AMBULANCE, FIRE BRIGADE**
 - **150 - FIRE BRIGADE**
 - **155 - AMBULANCE**
 - **158 - POLICE**
- Czech prefix for international calls – 00420....

Insurance

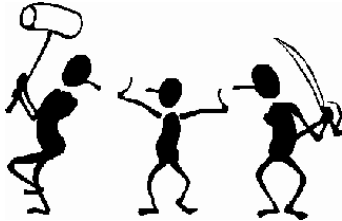


Necessarily I should say about insurance. We are fortunate because our AXA-insurance company is really good. It covers almost all needs in emergency (and other) situations. I have proved it myself. European Commission has subscribed a Group Insurance Plan for us. So you need just keep your personal ID AXA Card. It will be very useful. In this case you will always have the contact details of the European Benefits Administrators claims department, which you may contact for any inquiry. More info you can find on their website www.europeanbenefits.com.

For my own part I can say, that at the beginning you have to pay for your treatment and after you send claim form before the insurance company will settle your claim. If you do not have enough money, your hosting organization will help in this case before recovering the money from the Insurance Company.

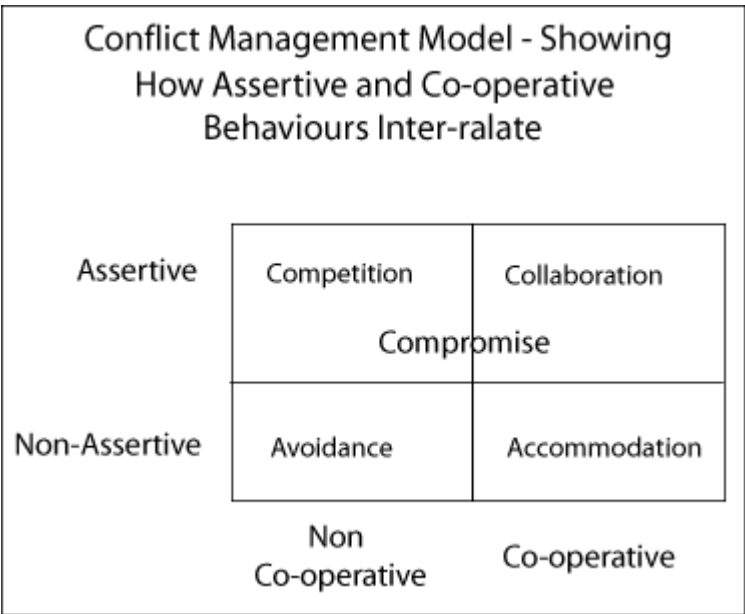
Alternatively you could subscribe to Czech insurance. In this case all treatment will be settled by your insurance and you need not pay anything.

The conflict situation and how to deal with it



Many things can happen with us. And none of us are safe from conflicts. We work with many people and sometimes some of us can feel stress or we can misunderstand each other. That is why we should find the way to control our emotions or find a solution.

There is good model which can help us in such situation.



Using the Conflict Management Model, you can see how behaviour can be expressed in terms of co-operation and assertiveness, and how that approach often works (or not!).

Avoidance - Non assertive, non co-operative

Avoidance is useful, if there is no pressing need to resolve differences now or in the future. Individuals are indifferent to each other's needs, and issues are evaded or ignored completely. Generally, this is not a useful long term conflict management strategy as the workplace is never small enough to avoid someone completely!

Accommodation - Non assertive, co-operative

Accommodation is allowing the other person's needs to be met, usually at the expense of your own. This is a useful conflict management strategy if you don't care about the issue, or if you have little power in the relationship or situation. Also, letting the other person have their way once in a while may preserve or even build a relationship. However, being too accommodating too often can weaken your position to the point where your voice is never heard.

Compromise - Some assertiveness, some cooperation

Compromise is on the path toward collaboration, somewhere between competition and accommodation. It's about giving up some ground in order to gain other ground elsewhere. You win some, you lose some! This is a useful conflict management strategy if time is tight, or if it's not worth exploring things more fully. Also, compromise is useful when one party can't force their solution on the other.

Competition - Assertive, non co-operative

Competition is the flip-side of accommodation - it's about making sure your own needs are met, no matter the cost. This [win-lose approach](#) is useful if there is an important deadline to meet, or if the relationship with the other party is not important. However, steam-rolling your way around the workplace may get things done, but there will be an army of people who won't catch you if you fall.

Collaboration - Assertive, co-operative

Collaboration is a road not often travelled as it can be long, and requires some skill and effort. Collaboration is about assuming positive intent and seeing things from all sides, in detail. It's about acknowledging and accepting differences, and exploring alternative solutions that meet everyone's needs and concerns. It is a useful conflict management strategy when the issues are important to everyone, and all sides need to be committed to the solution.

Source: <http://www.mftrou.com/workplace-conflict-management-strategy.html>

Let's try to see how to deal with conflict. This link - www.crnhg.org could help you to sort it out.

Learning, Czech language



In my experience, I can say, you should learn Czech. It is really great when you can communicate not only with your colleagues but with local people, too in many situations. When you can speak in native language with Czech they will be more helpful and sympathetic then if you try to explain them something in English or your language. Maybe at the beginning you will think that it is impossible to learn Czech- In fact, if you have motivation, there is nothing impossible. Everything is in your hands. I am sure. Be assured that it will be useful for you.

There are many possibilities for you to learn Czech. The best one – try to speak with other volunteers in Czech not English. Make it a rule in your home. You can also use language exchange – teaching young people your language or another you know good, in return they will help you with Czech. In this instance you will have not only good experience with communication but also you will find a lot of new friends and become involved to the local environment sooner then you expected.

If we talk about a good textbook, I can recommend “**Step by step**”. These is a really good book collating of exercises, rules and of course practice.

Also could be probably useful links for learning –

- www.trochujinak.cz/cz/tamjedem - opportunity to participate or organize a voluntary weekend in an non-governmental organizations, meeting spot of many EVS, ex-EVS volunteers

- www.myczechrepublic.com/czech_language - language exchange with a friend is getting quite popular, just ask around.
- <http://www.salto-youth.net/tools/training/> - one more link for volunteers who would like to develop some more. You have opportunity apply the training course in any area you'd love to. Just visit this page and choose what is more interesting for you. Also on this page you will find a lot of needful information for volunteers.

Practical tips and links



At first it will be difficult to navigate in the environment. So I want to help you here, too, using my own experience and advices of my colleagues and friends.

First of all I'd like to remind you about your **European Youth Card**, which is useful in Europe. For example, this is a card for young people offering a large number of discounts on culture, travel, accommodation, shopping and services in most European countries. If you haven't received the card for some reason or you lost it, you can fill out the form here <http://www.europeanyouthcard.org/projects/evs> and you will receive a new card within 10-14 days. Also on this website you will find detailed information about all the advantages of this card.

Travelling



Move on! My dear friends, you have a great chance to explore all the most interesting parts of the Czech Republic and other countries while you participate in EVS. Here I present you some useful links for traveling.

Below I offer you some effective links for travelling and short description.

- www.idos.cz – checking connection, also public transport in towns (www.jizdinarady.cz)
- www.cd.cz – there are many different discounts (group tickets, discount cards)
- www.eshop.cd.cz – online tickets for within the country and abroad (cheaper)
- www.wasteels.cz – international train tickets company, in Prague, Main train station, they speak English.
- <http://www.skyscanner.ru/> - just change in menu Language and search for a cheap flight***
- <http://www.anywayanyday.com/en/> - website for searching flights
- www.studentagency.cz,
<http://jizdenky.studentagency.cz> – my favorite company. Yellow buses with cheap tickets and hot drinks for free, reservation recommended, international destination are also covered by:

- www.euoline.cz, www.bohemialines.cz,
<http://www.tourbus.cz>
- www.spolujizda.cz – sharing a car
- www.spolubydlici.cz – renting room
- www.bezrealitiky.cz – renting a flat
- www.couchsurfing.org - is a worldwide network for making connections between travellers and the local communities they visit. I love it so much***

Leisure



- www.houser.cz – cinema, museums, clubs, concerts, theatres
- <http://www.palacecinemas.cz/>
www.dokina.cz, - cinema
- www.kudyznudy.cz – what to do in different regions across the country, sport, fun and entertainment
- www.akce.cz – culture, sports, entertainment across the country
- www.dodivadla.cz – theatres
- <http://www.olympia-centrum.cz>, <http://www.galerie-yankovka.cz/en>, <http://www.velkyspalicek.cz/cz/> - shopping in Brno

Volunteer's fable



In this chapter I'd like to share my experience with you. I think it could be like a "study guide" in how to survive or enjoy this volunteering life in Czech Republic. In short, I will try to describe my daily life and show you the delights of volunteering.

As soon as I got my visa for Czech Republic (I should underline that I lost one month waiting for all documents) I began the long journey called EVS. I won't go into details about red tape - just say that I reached my goal - I came to Czech Republic to commence my EVS-project. And immediately I was thrown into exploring locality and reaching our final destination - Ružemberg where me and other volunteers had our on-arrival training.

Girls! Attention! No high heels in Czech Republic! This is dangerous for your health.

After a week of training I eventually reached Brno, the place of my final destination where I was supposed to start my activities. Having got acquainted with my future colleagues, I was invited to the lunch, where I was pleasantly surprised to find they had ordered the tea that is not usual for people, because generally they drink...of course – BEER for the lunch. And this is normal. Unfortunately I don't drink beer at all but I chagrined the waiter and surprised my colleagues. So my friends, prepare yours stomachs. Beer here is much more cheaper then water. ☺

But let's come back to our mission. I did not need so much time to prepare to my job. So I started to work quite soon. Since I had enough time to do something else, I searched the webpage of Lužanky and found additional occupations for me, such as work in a Maceška (something like a kinder-garten) with small children who I love so much. I have started to learn pottery, zumba (new dance style) and yoga - everything you can do in Lužanky (<http://www.luzanky.cz>).

Also can I mention another big advantage of my project, it is participation in different festivals, travel, work-shops and other actions organized by Lužanky and Labyrinth where I worked. For me it was a great experience and left untold impressions.

Of course I didn't forget to learn Czech. But I should say that it was hard for me because in this case I was very lazy. I needed somebody to push me. And sometimes I hated myself because I couldn't find a reason to learn language. Many people could

understand me when I spoke English or Russian. But one day decision was taken – Olja went to the driving school. Here's another incentive - to learn Czech. So now I've materialized one of my desires. But in addition to self-realization, I wanted somehow to relax. In other words, I wanted to travel. My friends (other volunteers from on-arrival training) and I went travelling quite often. We visited many cities and we had fun despite the fact that all of us lived in different places.

But most of the time I have been spending with my fellows (other 2 volunteers – Gulsah, my “twin” from Turkey and Alan from France). We lived together in one house, sharing our attainments of international cuisine, habits and so on. We even had special rules which we should adhere in our house. It was great. We learned a lot from each other, and now I am very happy that I have such great friends like them.

And I would like to wish you something my dear friends:

ALWAYS SPEAK ABOUT THINGS WHICH DISTURB OR UPSET YOU. SPEAK ABOUT YOUR INTERESTS AND NEEDS WITH YOUR MENTORS, COLLEAGUES OR COORDINATORS. THEY ARE HERE TO HELP YOU. AND IF FOR SOME REASON SOMEONE DOESN'T HEAR YOU, JUST REPEAT YOUR QUESTIONS OR PROPOSAL. BE PERSISTENT IF YOU WANT TO SUCCEED, BE HEARD AND UNDERSTOOD. AND IF SOMEONE DOESN'T UNDERSTAND YOU TRY TO REACH OUT TO HIM THROUGH OTHERS. AND DON'T FORGET THAT IN THIS LIFE WE HAVEN'T ONLY TO OBTAIN SOMETHING BUT ALSO WE HAVE TO GIVE BACK.

P.S. Hope my dear friends, you have found something interesting and new. In return you can write me what you think about this VoG, whether it was useful or not. I will be happy to receive some references from you.

